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ABSTRACT

Based on a survey of 710 randomly selected persons from the Pinellas County (St. Petersburg area), Florida, Cooperative Extension mailing list, 54 of 566 respondents (9.5 percent) were willing to volunteer part of their time to assist the local Extension education program. Most respondents indicated home economics and horticulture as the main fields of interest for their volunteer work. They would make available a total of 105 hours of volunteer time per week to the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Service. A list of volunteers has been established from the survey, and each program area will be furnished with the names and addresses of the persons identified as volunteers for that field of interest. Based on the sample response of 9.5 percent, it was projected that volunteers could be increased to approximately 540 and an additional 1,470 volunteer hours per week could be added if the entire mailing list was contacted. The impact of such a volunteer force on the Extension audience of Pinellas County is difficult to predict; however, the success of the volunteer program in Cooperative Extension will be measured by counting the increase in clientele contact, and comparing it to previous years' records. (KC)

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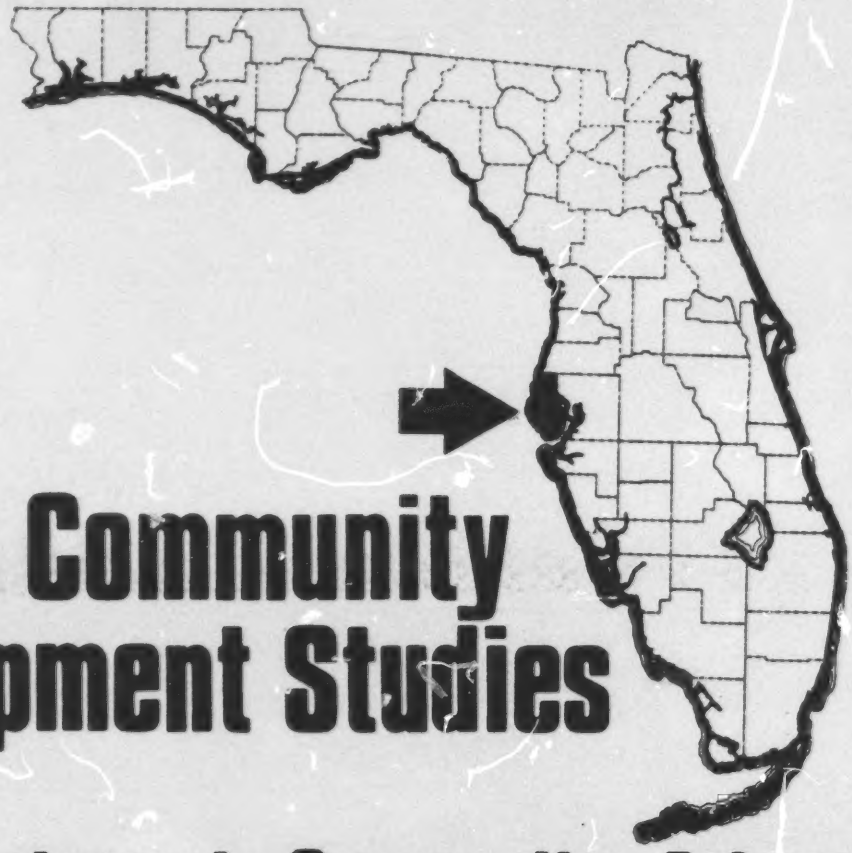

# County Community Development Studies

## No. 1: Volunteers in Cooperative Extension Pinellas County

Klaus J. Geyer and Don E. Sweat

Center for Community & Rural Development and
Department of Agricultural and Extension Education

Florida Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
University of Florida, Gainesville

CE 028 802

# VOLUNTEERS IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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Pinellas County

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Pinellas County

COUNTY BASED

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PROJECTS

The following report represents the community development efforts of an extension agent at the county level. This project demonstrates, in-so-far as possible, the unbiased collection of data for decision making and the involvement of the community in the solution or identification of a problem.

We applaud the efforts of this extension agent in the area of community and rural development.

Editor:

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## SYNOPSIS

Based on a survey of 710 randomly selected persons from the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension mailing list, 54 of 566 respondents (or 9.5 percent) were willing to volunteer part of their time to assist the local Extension education program. Most respondents indicated home economics and horticulture as the main fields of interest for their volunteer work. They would make available a total of 105 hours of volunteer time per week to the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Service.

VOLUNTEERS IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

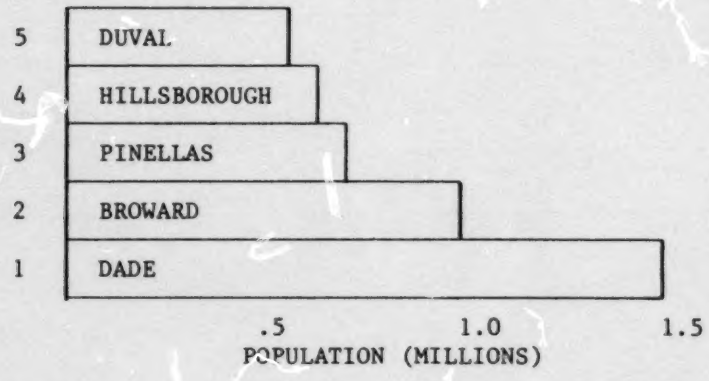
Pinellas County, Florida

## Introduction

Pinellas County is located on the central Florida west coast. The county is the only one in Florida which, like the state itself, is a peninsula. It is bordered on the east and south by Tampa Bay, while the Gulf of Mexico lies to the west.

Pinellas was formed from Hillsborough County in 1911. It is the second smallest county in area within the state, with only 265 square miles. With a population of 791,000 people in 1978, Pinellas was ranked third in overall population behind Dade and Broward Counties (Figure 1).

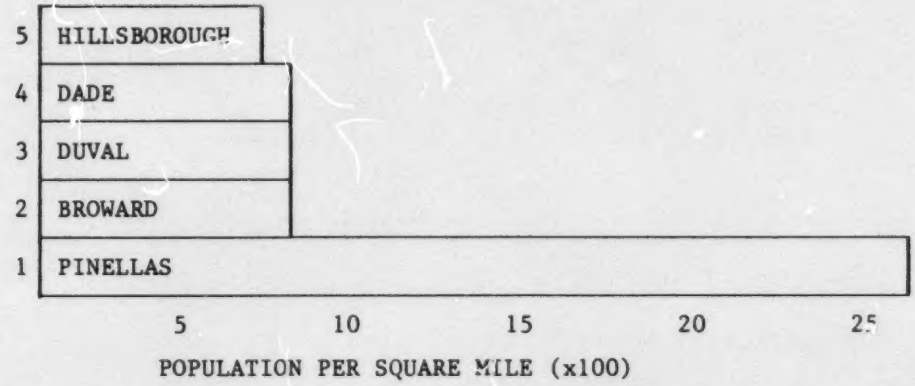
Figure 1.
Rank of Counties by Population



During this year Pinellas County also ranked number one in population density (population/square mile) as it has since 1960 (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Rank of Counties by Population Density




Now a highly urbanized county, tourism, and light industry have almost completely reduced the role of agriculture in the economy of Pinellas County. Temperatures are moderated by the surrounding waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay, and the average high and low for the year are 82° F. and 66° F., respectively. June through September are the warmest months, with temperatures seldom reaching 95° F. November through February represents the coolest period, with a temperature of 32° F. occurring on an average of 5 to 10 days every year, and a drop to 28° F. or lower about three times.

Annual rainfall is about 55 inches, with 60 percent falling from June through September. In summer, afternoon and evening showers can drop as much as two or three inches within two hours. Rainfall during fall, winter, and spring is not as intense

as rainfall during the summer. Day-long rains in summer are rare, usually occurring in conjunction with tropical storms.

Tropical storms affect the area from early in June until mid-November. Pinellas County's chances of experiencing hurricane force winds of 74 miles per hour or more are one in 20 for any given year. Heavy rainfall can cause considerable flood damage.

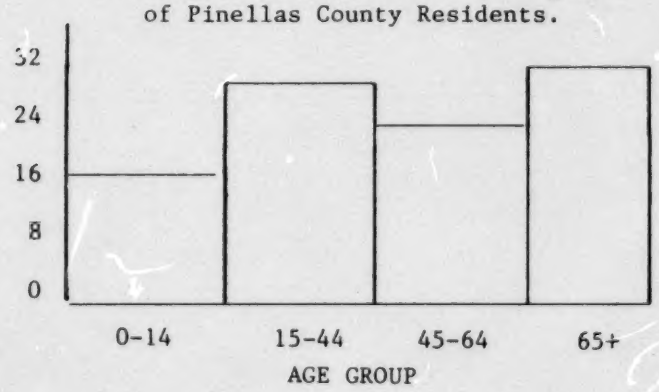
Extended periods of dry weather occur in any season, but are most common in spring and fall. Dry periods in April and May are shorter than those in fall, but cause more damage to plants because of higher temperatures.

Winds are southerly during March, and from the north and east the rest of the year. Wind speeds range from 10 to 15 miles per hour in the afternoon, and from five to 10 miles per hour at night.

The population of Pinellas County is rather unique in that 32 percent are 65 years of age or over (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

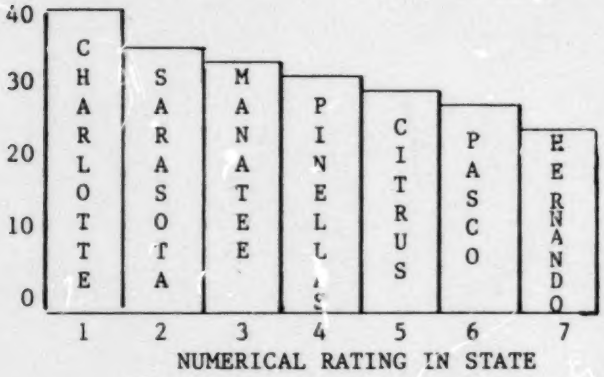
1977 AGE Distributions (Percentages) of Pinellas County Residents.



The only counties with higher percentages in this age bracket are Manatee, Sarasota, and Charlotte. Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco are not far behind, however, with percentages in this age bracket ranging from 26.8 to 31.5 (Figure 4).

Figure 4.

1977 County AGE Distributions Showing Percent of Total Population 65 Years and Over.




## Purpose of Study

For years Pinellas County, and especially the city of St. Petersburg, has been the retirement center of Florida. The number of retired persons settling in the county has steadily increased so that today one-third of the population of Pinellas County is of retirement age. Since persons from all walks of life and areas of the United States have chosen this area as their retirement place, a great diversity of educational and professional backgrounds exists.

The Cooperative Extension Service of Pinellas County provides information and education to many persons in the county on a variety of subjects. Much of the subject matter teaching is done individually, which limits the number of people who can

be reached. One way to increase the potential audience is the use of volunteers. Many other organizations such as hospitals, church groups, and social agencies have used or employed volunteers successfully in their programs.

## Survey Procedure

The object of this survey was to determine if retired persons were interested in assisting the local Extension program as volunteers. The population sampled was familiar with the Cooperative Extension Service through a monthly newsletter, Timely Topics. Subscription is free, and any citizen of the county is eligible to receive the newsletter upon request. The Timely Topics newsletter circulation is approximately 7,100. Subscribers' names and addresses are computer printed on labels. An alphabetized master list for cross-reference is also available. From this list, a random 10 percent sample was chosen by selecting every tenth name. Each name selected was assigned a number, which was written on the master list, as well as on the survey instruments. This coding served a twofold purpose: (1) It helped identify persons who had not returned their survey form after a predetermined time period, and (2) it made it easy to compile a list of potential volunteers.

The survey form was developed with ease of response in mind to encourage maximum return (Appendix A). The first two questions determined the responder's status of retirement and willingness to volunteer. Question three through six identified the potential volunteer's skills or fields of expertise, areas of interest, and hours available for volunteer

work and the Extension program area which he or she would be interested in assisting.

The one-page survey form and a cover letter (Appendix B) explaining the reason for conducting the survey, and a self-addressed, postage-free return envelope were mailed to the 710 persons selected by the random method described above on April 23, 1979. Four days later, on April 27, 1979, a postcard (Appendix C) followed the first mailing. This reminder was sent to all 710 persons sampled, regardless of whether they had returned the completed survey form or not. Twelve days from the original mailing, a second survey form plus cover letter (Appendix D) and return envelope, were sent to the 328 persons who had not returned the survey instrument. The project was completed on May 23, 1979. Responses were categorized, tabulated, and a list of potential volunteers was drawn up.*

## Results

Of the original 710 survey forms which were mailed, an initial return of 382 was received within 12 days. This represented a 53.8 percent return. Nineteen days later, an additional 199 forms had been received as a result of a second mailing. This gave a total of 581 returns, an overall percentage of 81.8.

Five hundred and sixty-six returns were judged usuable. The remaining 15 were either returned blank or had been filled out in a manner which negated their use.

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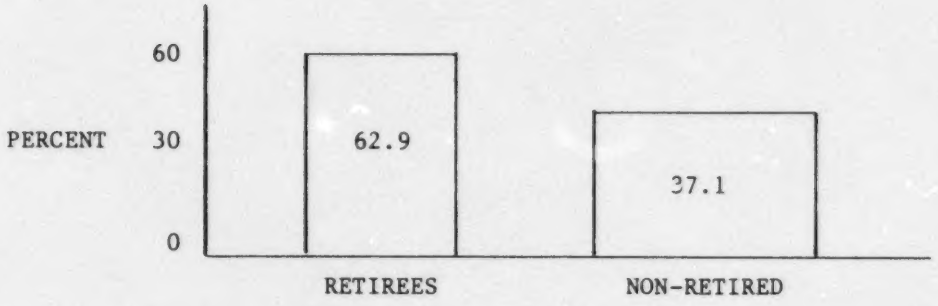
*Available upon request from the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Service, Post Office Box 267, Largo, Florida 33540.

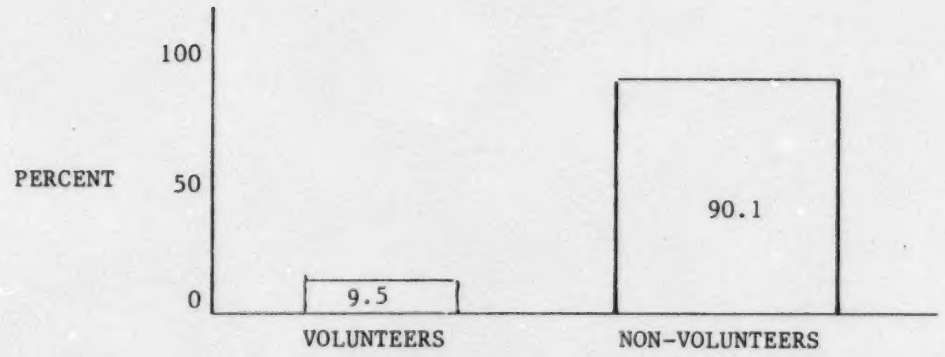
Three hundred and fifty-six (62.9 percent) respondents indicated that they were retired, while 210 (37.1 percent) said that they were not (Figure 5).

Figure 5.
Respondents Status.




Fifty-four respondents (9.5 percent) indicated that they were willing to volunteer part of their time to assist the local Extension education program. Five hundred and ten returns (90.1 percent) said that they were not willing (Figure 6).

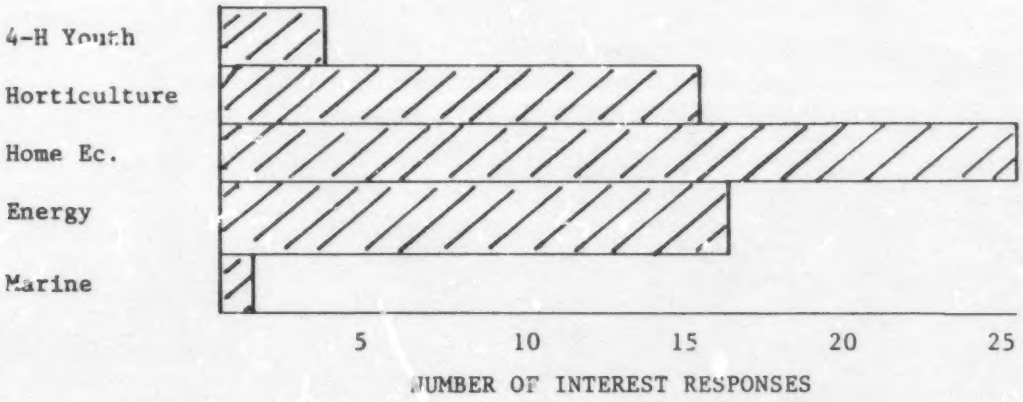
Figure 6.
Volunteers vs. Non-Volunteers.




Of the 54 volunteers, most indicated one or more program preferences as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Program Interests of Volunteers.




Thirty-six of this same group indicated a number of hours per week, month, or year which they would be willing to work. These times, when converted to a per week basis, ranged from less than one-half to 16 hours per person or 105 total volunteer hours per week.

## Implications

The survey showed that there is an interest among the many retired persons living in Pinellas County in serving as volunteers to the Cooperative Extension Service. A list of volunteers has been established from the survey and divided into horticulture, home economics, 4-H youth, marine advisory, and energy conservation according to the interest indicated on the survey form. Each program area will be furnished with the names and addresses of the persons identified as volunteers through this survey.

It is interesting to note that several persons indicated a desire for volunteer work even though they were not retired. In addition, a number of unsolicited comments indicated that health and lack of transportation prevented some persons from

offering to volunteer their services.

From the types of skills and interests indicated on the survey form, most volunteers could be used in more than one subject area within Extension. This will greatly enhance and expand the educational scope of the Cooperative Extension Service. In the future, additional volunteers can be identified by expanding the survey to include all 7,100 subscribers of Timely Topics newsletter. Based on the sample response of 9.5 percent volunteers, this would result in a projected increase of volunteers from the present 54 to approximately 540. This large number of people represents a sizable amount of needed assistance. As indicated by the survey, a total of 105 volunteer hours per week would be available to the Pinellas County Extension Service immediately; and an additional 1,470 volunteer hours per week could be added if the volunteer force were expanded to the projected 540 persons.

The impact of such a volunteer force on the Extension audience of Pinellas County is difficult to predict. However, if each volunteer made contact with two people per week, this would expand our Extension audience by over 56,000 residents in the course of one year. The success of the volunteer program in Cooperative Extension will be measured by counting the increase in clientele contact, and comparing it to previous years' records.

Volunteers with their varied skills and interests represent a valuable community resource which has only been sparingly tapped in the past. Cooperative Extension work is teaching people to help themselves, and those who volunteer their time and talents are helping themselves as well as others.

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# APPENDIX A

## POTENTIAL UTILIZATION OF RETIREES IN EXTENSION EDUCATION PROGRAMS -- A SURVEY

## POTENTIAL UTILIZATION OF RETIREES IN EXTENSION EDUCATION PROGRAMS -- A SURVEY

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Your responses will be most helpful to the Cooperative Extension Service of Pinellas County. We are trying to determine if there is an interest by the retired citizens to share their expertise as volunteers.

ALL INFORMATION FROM THIS SURVEY IS CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL ONLY BE USED TO IDENTIFY THOSE WHO WANT TO VOLUNTEER.

1) Are you retired? _____ Yes _____ No

2) Would you be willing to volunteer part of your time to assist the local Extension education program? _____ Yes _____ No

> If the answer to question number two is no, go no further. Please return this survey in the enclosed postage-free envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

If you answered yes to question number two, please continue:

3) Which of the following Extension program areas would you be interested in assisting? (Check as many as apply.)

A) Horticulture _____
B) Home Economics _____
C) 4-H/Youth Program _____
D) Marine Advisory _____
E) Energy Conservation _____

4) What are your skills or fields of expertise (work experience, etc.)?

_____

5) What are your other areas of interest (hobbies, etc.)?

_____

6) How many hours would you be available for volunteer work? (Fill in one.)

A) _____ hours/week
B) _____ hours/month
C) _____ Hours/year

Please return this survey in the enclosed postage-free envelope to: Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Service, Post Office Box 267, Largo, FL 33540.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Donald E. Sweat
Marine Extension Agent

Klaus J. Geyer
Extension Agent - Ornamentals

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE

FLORIDA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

REPLY TO:

Post Office Box 267
Largo, FL 33540

Dear Timely Topics Reader:

May we take a few minutes of your time and ask you to fill out the attached survey?

The 1978 estimated population of Pinellas County was 791,000 including 32 percent, or 253,000 persons, of retirement age. If you are one of these enviable people with leisure time, then this survey is directed to you.

We are studying the possibility of having retired persons assist the Extension program as volunteers. Due to a lack of manpower, many of our proven educational programs reach only a small portion of the people in our county.

We feel certain that many of you have both the expertise and interest to assist us with these educational programs.

All information gathered through the survey will be held in strictest confidence, and only those who are willing to serve will be identified. The number on your form is solely for record-keeping purposes.

We would appreciate you returning the attached survey within the next ten days. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Sweat
Marine Extension Agent

Klaus J. Geyer
Extension Agent - Ornamentals

Enclosures



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, COOPERATING

Dear Timely Topics Reader:

By this time you should have received the short survey form which we mailed to you last week. The survey results are very important to us in planning our future Extension educational programs.

Would you please take a few minutes right now to complete the survey form and return it to us in the postage-free envelope provided. If you have already responded, we would like to thank you for your prompt interest and help.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Sweat
Marine Extension Agent

Klaus J. Geyer
Extension Agent - Ornamentals

FLORIDA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SCHOOL OF FOREST RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATIONS
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

REPLY TO:

Post Office Box 267
Largo, FL 33540

Dear Timely Topics Reader:

We recently mailed a short survey form to you requesting your assistance for a study we are undertaking.

This study is designed to determine the possible interest by retired persons in assisting us with our Extension educational programs.

We have not yet received your response, perhaps it is in the mail. If not, would you please take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed duplicate survey form. Also enclosed is an addressed, postage-free envelope for your convenience.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Sweat
Marine Extension Agent

Klaus J. Geyer
Extension Agent - Ornamentals

Enclosures



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, COOPERATING